

ARTIE

BEGIN THE BEGUINE

Shaw

AND HIS ORCHESTRA



ARTIE SHAW AND HIS ORCHESTRA
BEGIN THE BEGUINE

ARTIE SHAW AND HIS ORCHESTRA—BEGIN THE BEGUINE



6274-I-RB

SIDE ONE

1. Nightmare (Shaw)

Artie Shaw, *clarinet, leader*; Chuck Peterson, John Best, Claude Bowen, *trumpet*; George Arus, Russell Brown, Harry Rogers, *trombone*; George Koenig, Hank Freeman, *alto saxophone*; Tony Pastor, Ronnie Perry, *tenor saxophone*; Les Burness, *piano*; Al Avola, *guitar*; Sid Weiss, *string bass*; Cliff Leeman, *drums*.

New York, September 27, 1938

Bluebird B-7875 (mx: BS-027229-1)

2. Indian Love Call (Friml - Harbach - Hammerstein)

As track 1, but substitute Ted Vesley, *trombone*, for Brown and Les Robinson, *alto saxophone*, for Koenig.

Add Tony Pastor and band, *vocal*.

New York, July 24, 1938

Bluebird B-7746 (mx: BS-024080-1)

3. Back Bay Shuffle (Macrae - Shaw)

As track 2, minus vocal.

New York, July 24, 1938

Bluebird B-7759 (mx: BS-024082-1)

4. Any Old Time (Shaw)

As track 2, but substitute Billie Holiday, *vocal*, for Pastor.

New York, July 24, 1938

Bluebird B-7759 (mx: BS-024083-1)

5. Traffic Jam (Macrae - Shaw)

Artie Shaw, *clarinet, leader*; Chuck Peterson, John Best, Bernie Privin, *trumpet*; George Arus, Les Jenkins, Harry Rogers, *trombone*; Les Robinson, Hank Freeman, *alto saxophone*; Tony Pastor, Georgie Auld, *tenor saxophone*; Bob Kitsis, *piano*; Al Avola, *guitar*; Sid Weiss, *string bass*; Buddy Rich, *drums*.
Hollywood, June 12, 1939
Bluebird B-10385 (mx: PBS-036268-4)

6. What Is This Thing Called Love? (Porter)

As track 1

New York, September 27, 1938

Bluebird B-10001 (mx: 027232-1)

7. Begin the Beguine (Porter)

As track 3

New York, July 24, 1938

Bluebird B-7746 (mx: BS-024079-1)

8. The Carioca (Youmans - Eliscu - Kahn)

As track 5, but substitute Harry Geller, *trumpet*, for Best.

Aircheck, New York, August 19, 1939

Victor LPT-6000 (no matrix)

SIDE TWO

1. Moonray (Quenzer - Madison - Shaw)

As Side One, track 8, but substitute Dave Barbour, *guitar*, for Avola.

Add Helen Forrest, *vocal*.

Aircheck, New York, November 11, 1939

Victor LTP-6000 (no matrix)

2. Frenesi (Dominquez)

Artie Shaw, *clarinet, leader*; Charlie Margulis, Manny Klein, George Thow, *trumpet*; Randall Miller, Bill Rank, Babe Bowman, *trombone*; Blake Reynolds, Bud Carlton, Jack Stacey, *alto saxophone*; Dick Clark, *tenor saxophone*; Joe Krechter, *bass clarinet*; Jack Cave, *flugelhorn*; Morton Ruderman, *flute*; Phil Nemoli, *oboe*; Mark Levant, Harry Bluestone, Peter Eisenberg, Robert Barene, Sid Brokow, Dave Cracov, Alex Law, Jerry Joyce, *violin*; David Sturkin, Stanley Spiegelman, Jack Gray, *viola*; Irving Lipschultz, Jules Tannenbaum, *cello*; Stan Wrightman, *piano*; Bobby Sherwood, *guitar*; Jud DeNaut, *string bass*; Carl Maus, *drums*.

Hollywood, March 3, 1940

Victor 26542 (mx: BS-042546-1)

3. Serenade to a Savage (Garland)

As Side One, track 5

Hollywood, June 22, 1939

Bluebird B-10385 (mx: PBS-036269-10)

4. Temptation (Freed - Brown)

Artie Shaw, *clarinet, leader*; George Wendt, J. Cathcart, Billy Butterfield, *trumpet*; Jack Jenney, Vernon Brown, *trombone*; Bus Bassey, Neely Plumb, *alto saxophone*; Les Robinson, Jerry Jerome, *tenor saxophone*; E. Lamas, T. Klages, Bob Morrow, B. Bower, Al Beller, *violin*; A. Harshman, K. Collins, *viola*; F. Goerner, *cello*; Johnny Guarneri, *piano*; Al Hendrickson, *electric guitar*; Jud DeNaut, *string bass*; Nick Fatoool, *drums*.

Hollywood, September 7, 1940

Victor 27230 (mx: PBS-055069-1)

5. Star Dust (Carmichael - Parrish)

As Side Two, track 4

Hollywood, October 7, 1940

Victor 27230 (mx: PBS-055097-1)

6. Blues (Parts I and II) (Still)

As Side Two, track 4, but add William Grant Still, *arranger*.

Hollywood, December 4, 1940

Victor 27411 (mx: PBS-055191-3/055192-3)

7. Moonglow (DeLange - Mills - Hudson)

As Side Two, track 4, but add Ray Conniff, *trombone*.

Hollywood, January 23, 1941

Victor 27405 (mx: PBS-055258-1)

Public performance clearance—ASCAP

Executive Producer: Steve Backer
Reissue Produced by Michael Brooks
Digital engineering by Ed Begley

It's not exactly a date we have stored in our memory banks, but May 24, 1936, marks a milestone event in jazz history: the first real jazz concert.

The spark ignited by Benny Goodman's band at Los Angeles' Palomar Ballroom, a year earlier, was sweeping across the country like an inferno of sizzling solos and brassy riffs; it was a swing fever that soon would have young people performing frenzied dance steps in theater aisles and ballrooms, and one of the men who saw the handwriting on the wall was Joe Helbock, the proprietor of the Onyx Club, one of the most popular hot spots on New York's West 52nd Street. Helbock decided to capitalize on the phenomenon by staging a "Swing Music Concert" at the Imperial Theater.

Bob Crosby's band and the Casa Loma Orchestra headlined the bill, which also included small units from the bands of Paul Whiteman, Louis Armstrong and Tommy Dorsey. To provide transitional music while the stage was being readied for the star attractions, Helbock asked lesser-known musicians to assemble small groups that would play one or two numbers each. The least known of these fill-in leaders was Arthur Shaw, a slightly eccentric 26-year-old reed player who had been a professional player since he was 15 and was sometimes known to treat the music business as if it were an institution he had been sentenced to. He had built up a good reputation as a CBS studio musician when he suddenly quit to retire to an old farmhouse he purchased in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. After a year spent writing a novel about his one-time roommate, Bix Beiderbecke, he tore up the manuscript, because he "wasn't satisfied with it," and returned to the CBS job, which paid the bills but offered him little in the way of artistic satisfaction.

Because the Helbock concert was for the benefit of the musicians' union Local 802, Shaw saw it as an opportunity to catch the attention of some of the music industry's movers and shakers. Knowing that the program would be on the hot, brassy side, he decided to present a softer alternative, so he added traditional string quartet instrumentation and a rhythm section to his jazz clarinet. It was a bit of early fusion and it garnered the attention it had been designed for. As it gathered on the Imperial Theater's stage, Arthur Shaw's Swing String Ensemble formed a striking visual contrast to the brass-laden big band that preceded it, so the air filled with expectation and curiosity. "My knees were knocking together like a pair of castanets," Shaw has recalled. "Well, we got out there somehow, and somehow we managed to get started." As things turned out, this was the start of many things for Artie Shaw. Despite its relative tranquility, *Interlude in B-flat*—a composition he wrote especially for the concert—proved to be the evening's high point, and when the audience demanded more, Shaw and his men played it again—they had only rehearsed that one piece.

With the sweet sound of applause still ringing in his ears, Shaw took the suggestion of a leading booking agency and formed Art Shaw and His Orchestra—actually the Imperial Theater group augmented by four horns—hoping to recapture the evening's success on a larger scale. The band toured and cut some sides for the Brunswick label, but failed to generate the public's interest, all of which convinced Shaw that people care less about musical quality and more about noise. "If a band couldn't play good music, it could always call itself a 'swing band' and play loud music

instead," he contended. Accordingly, he decided to form "the loudest band in the whole goddamn world."

Art Shaw and His New Music, a 14-piece band without strings, was probably not the loudest in the land, but neither was it the most successful, so Shaw took a few months off to reorganize. When he returned, the band had undergone a substantial personnel change, and its book—previously heavy with stock arrangements and inferior tunes—now contained a good number of songs by established writers. The strings were gone, but, true to form, Shaw broke another convention by hiring a black singer—Billie Holiday. To capture all this, there was also a new recording contract, with Bluebird—RCA's lower-priced label—whose officials insisted that he bill himself as Artie, because "Art Shaw" sounded too much like a fast sneeze.

The changes and additions paid off. At the band's first Bluebird session, Shaw persuaded the producer to let him record *Begin the Beguine*, a Cole Porter tune from an unsuccessful 1935 Broadway show, "Jubilee." Porter's inspiration for the tune had come from watching native dancers perform the beguine on the island of Martinique, but Shaw had arranger Jerry Gray substitute a modified 4/4 beat for the original beguine rhythm, and it had tested well on dancers at Boston's Roseland State Ballroom. The producer agreed to record the Porter song, but insisted on making *Indian Love Call* the A side, because it was a better-known tune and it featured a vocal by one of the band's most valued assets, tenor saxophonist Tony Pastor.

The band was on tour, in St. Louis, when word came that *Begin the Beguine*, the B side of their first release, had become the country's number one record. In just a few weeks, it established Artie Shaw as a national celebrity, rivaling the "King of Swing" himself, Benny Goodman. "That recording of that one little tune was the real turning point of my life," Shaw later said.

His good looks and new-found celebrity soon landed Artie Shaw in Hollywood and made him the focus of movie-magazine prattle. In the eyes of a materialistic nation, he had arrived, but Shaw was not some wide-eyed hick to be dazzled by the film capital's glitter, and he rather resented the clamoring fans, because they robbed him of his privacy and, he felt, idolized him for the wrong reasons. "The mass American public is by and large musically illiterate," he wrote in his 1952 autobiography, "and as is the case with any uneducated group when confronted with a highly specialized, technically involved form of activity, there is always this engrossment with surface detail rather than intrinsic merit."

In Shaw's case, the surface details were the stuff of which gossip magazines were made: Here was a dashing handsome, financially successful glamor figure who had the nation dancing to his rhythms while some of Hollywood's most stunning beauties vied for his romantic attention—and got it. There was also something intriguing about his candor, and the seeming disdain he held for the spotlight that now followed him. Astute observers noted the dichotomy inherent in Shaw's on the one hand loathing the attention from fans and the press, on the other hand feeding it by living the Hollywood fantasy. If there was anything to be learned from all this, perhaps it was that publicity-shy men ought not to date women on whom the world has focused its attention, nor should they marry—for however brief a period—the likes of Lana Turner and Ava Gardner.

As for the intrinsic merit, it was to be found in Shaw's music, which—as this album proves—has outlived the surface details. Some 85 sides made for Bluebird and Victor between 1938 and 1945 document Shaw's studio activity during the peak years of his popularity. They reflect the big band's changes, including the reintroduction of strings.

Although they cover only two and a half years, the 15 selections (actually 16 78-rpm sides) in this album form a good cross section of Shaw's output during his association with RCA. Besides *Begin the Beguine*, it includes the only selection Billie Holiday recorded with Shaw (*Any Old Time*), his theme song (*Nightmare*), such Shaw jukebox hits as *Blues*, *Back Bay Shuffle* and *Traffic Jam*, a classic strings (*Frenesi*) and even a couple of 1939 airchecks (*The Carioca* and *Moonray*).

During the RCA years, Artie Shaw continued to make non-musical as well as musical headlines. He eloped with Lana Turner, his third wife (there were eight in all), and divorced her within a year. Old Gold cigarettes dropped sponsorship of his radio show following mass complaints from fans who resented his having publicly called them "morons." The latter incident prompted Shaw to walk off the bandstand and head for Mexico, and that, in turn, inspired *Down Beat* magazine to come to his defense. In its November 15, 1939, editorial, the so-called musician's bible damned the music industry, the business world and Shaw's dissatisfied fans: "And altho (sic) Artie has had some tough publicity breaks, because he expressed himself, let's not condemn him for his honesty or his very human preference to be a good musician instead of a good businessman. Let's applaud him for his courage and honesty and hope a new and greater respect will come from businessmen and promoters for a musician trying to be a better musician!" Shaw had gone to Mexico to escape from such annoyances as publicity, but he soon found himself back on the front pages for rescuing a young lady from drowning.

While the surface details continued to conjure up the image of a self-destructive, spoiled playboy, Artie Shaw remained the serious artist, as *Down Beat* pointed out. "He worked very hard to build a band," said drummer Cliff Leeman, "and, although he was pretty hot headed at times, he was always very conscientious and musically demanding—pretty much a perfectionist." Reed-man Frankie Socolow concurred. "In his band you really had to play, he wouldn't accept guys who couldn't blow," he said. "Somebody contracted the band for him, but when he went into rehearsal, he immediately weeded out the players he didn't like—without question. He rarely mingled with the band, as other leaders might have, but he seemed very serious about his music, and he was a stickler for discipline—he always looked to have the band sound the best it possibly could. He himself was a very lyrical player—I dug him."

This is an album of intrinsic merit.

—CHRIS ALBERTSON
Contributing Editor, Stereo Review

PRODUCER'S NOTE: We feel that these digital versions of mono recordings, many of them made almost 50 years ago, have been transferred as painstakingly and carefully as contemporary technology will allow. But digital recording is not magic, so where imperfections exist in original source recordings, they have been removed only insofar as their removal will not cause a loss in the sound of the music. These are not 1987 audiophile recordings, but the music comes through with the power and authority its makers intended.

Cover Illustration: Tom Edinger
Art Director: Neal Pozner



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Digital

SIDE ONE

6274-1-RB-A

BEGIN THE BEGUINE

Artie Shaw

1. Nightmare (A. Shaw) 2:47
2. Indian Love Call (R. Friml-O. Harbach-O. Hammerstein II) 3:06
3. Back Bay Shuffle (T. McCrae-A. Shaw) 3:10
4. Any Old Time (A. Shaw) 3:09
5. Traffic Jam (T. McCrae-A. Shaw) 2:12
6. What Is This Thing Called Love (C. Porter) 3:13
7. Begin The Beguine (C. Porter) 3:11
8. The Carioca (V. Youmans-E. Eliscu-G. Kahn) 4:03

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RCA

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BLUEBIRD

Digitally

Remastered

SIDE TWO

6274-1-RB-B

BEGIN THE BEGUINE

Artie Shaw

1. Moonray (A. Quenzer-P. Madison-A. Shaw) 3:03
2. Frenesi (A. Dominguez) 3:01
3. Serenade To A Savage (J. Garland) 2:28
4. Temptation (Freed-Brown) 3:02
5. Stardust (Carmichael-Parrish) 3:30
6. Blues (Parts I & II) (Still) 6:21
7. Moonglow (DeLange-Mills-Hudson) 3:25

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RCA

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